

Salmonellosis

Disease Fact Sheet Series

What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is a bacterial infection that generally affects the intestinal tract and occasionally urine, the bloodstream or other body tissues. It is a common cause of diarrheal illness in Wisconsin with over a thousand cases reported each year.

Who gets salmonellosis?

Any person can get salmonellosis.

How are salmonella bacteria spread?

Salmonella bacteria are spread by eating or drinking contaminated food or water or by direct or indirect contact with fecal material from infected people or animals.

What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

People exposed to salmonella bacteria may experience mild to severe diarrhea, abdominal pains, fever, and occasionally vomiting for several days. Bloodstream infections are infrequent but can be quite serious, particularly in the very young or elderly.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

The symptoms generally appear 18 to 36 hours after exposure, but they can occur as quickly as 12 hours or as long as 72 hours after exposure.

Where are Salmonella found?

Salmonella are widely distributed in our food chain and environment. The bacteria can be found in raw meats, poultry, eggs, unpasteurized milk and dairy products. People may also become exposed to *Salmonella* bacteria through contact with animals such as pet chicks, dogs, cats and reptiles. (See *Reptile-Associated Salmonella* Disease Fact Sheet)

For how long can an infected person carry *Salmonella*?

The time period that a person can have *Salmonella* in their stool (even after symptoms cease) is variable, usually several days to several weeks. A temporary carrier state may continue for months, especially in infants or people who have been treated with antibiotics. About 1% of infected adults and 5% of children under 5 years old shed *Salmonella* in their stool for over a year.

(Over)

Do infected people need to be isolated or excluded from work or school?

Since *Salmonella* bacteria are in the feces, people with active diarrhea who are unable to control their bowel habits (e.g. infants, young children, certain individuals with disabilities) should be strictly supervised. Most infected people may return to work or school when their stools become formed provided they carefully wash their hands after toilet visits. Food workers, health care workers and children in day care must obtain the approval of the local health department before returning to work.

What is the treatment for salmonellosis?

Most people with salmonellosis will recover on their own or only require fluids to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics and antidiarrheal drugs are generally not recommended for persons with typical intestinal infections.

How can salmonellosis be prevented?

1. Always treat raw eggs, poultry, beef and pork as if they are contaminated and handle accordingly.
 - Wrap fresh meats in plastic bags at the market to prevent blood from dripping onto other foods.
 - Refrigerate foods promptly; minimize holding at room temperature.
 - When refrigerating meats, place them on the bottom shelves to prevent blood from dripping onto other foods.
 - Cutting boards and counters used for preparation should be washed with soap immediately after use to prevent cross contamination with other foods.
 - Avoid eating raw or undercooked meats.
 - Ensure that the correct internal cooking temperature is reached particularly when using a microwave oven.
2. Avoid eating raw or undercooked eggs or undercooking foods which contain raw eggs.
3. Avoid using and drinking raw (unpasteurized) milk.
4. Carefully wash hands with soap before and after food preparation.
5. Make sure children wash their hands with soap before eating, especially after handling pets.
6. Always carefully wash hands with soap after toilet visits.